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PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
Third session
Geneva, 12 August-4 September 1991
Working Group I
Agenda item 3 (a)

LAND RESOURCES DEFORESTATION

Position paper submitted by Finland

Forest issues in Agenda 21

Based on discussions on Guiding Principles for a Consensus on Forests, Agenda 21 could include the following programme areas.

A. An agreement to negotiate a global convention on forests

1. A global convention on the management, conservation and development of all types of forests (including woodlands) should be created through negotiations under the auspices of the General Assembly of the United Nations. It would urge a balance between developmental and environmental aspects within the forest sector, acknowledge the sovereign right for decision-making by each party, and emphasize the global responsibility of parties related to forest heritage and the functioning of forest ecosystems. The official negotiations on a convention should be started as soon as possible after UNCED to have it ready to be signed in 1994/1995.

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B. Greening of the world

2. Greening of the world, through reforestation and afforestation, should be set as a target in order to provide sufficient long-term production of fuelwood, industrial wood and other goods and services, to maintain biological diversity, to create new sinks for carbon dioxide, to improve watershed management, combat desertification, create facilities for agroforestry, and to alleviate poverty taking into account the role of women. The greening programme should aim at ensuring that the standing stock (stemwood volume of living trees) no longer decreases after the year 2005 on the global basis.

C. National plans for the utilization and conservation of forests

3. National plans for the conservation and sustainable utilization of different forest ecosystems should be developed to meet present and future social, economic and cultural needs. These plans should be integrated with land-use management. The Guiding Principles for the Consensus on Forests give a basis for these plans. The needs of indigenous peoples must be fully respected.

D. Technological and financial assistance in forestry and forest conservation

4. Special priority should be given to forestry and forest conservation in development programmes at both national, regional and global level. Existing resources should be used effectively and new resources nationally and internationally should be made available as required. Financial and technological assistance should be targetted according to the national plans of forestry and forest conservation.

E. Research, dissemination of research results and training

5. Research and its applications should be fully utilized to improve the basis of forest management and conservation. Cooperation should be strengthened in this field nationally, regionally and globally. A balanced view should be adopted in all phases of research and education between the economic, social and environmental aspects related to forests. Research, education and training should carefully elaborate the various roles of forest ecosystems.

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LAND RESOURCES

DEFORESTATION

Position paper submitted by the Netherlands*

Forestry in Agenda 21

1. This position paper contains the views of the European Community and its member States with respect to forest issues in relation to Agenda 21 and should be seen as a contribution to the ongoing debate on this issue.

2. Agenda 21 should set out the areas, targets and process for promoting and helping to achieve the principles for a global consensus on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests, taking due account of the need to strengthen, improve and, where appropriate, reorientate existing targets and programmes (e.g. CGIAR, TFAP, ITTO 2000 target). Agenda 21 should be a process-oriented dynamic action programme reflecting the overall principles for the forestry sector and thus setting practical ways and means for multilateral cooperation.

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* On behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the European Community.

3. The overall objective of the Agenda 21 programme should be to assist in counteracting processes of environmental degradation, in particular land degradation, promoting sustainable management of natural resources and meeting the requirements of rural populations. More specific objectives should be to maintain and/or increase the production potential of the land, including recovery of degraded areas and identification of new areas for agricultural production; address pressures arising on forests from outside the forest sector, including agriculture; clarify land ownership with the aim of ensuring that local people have secure access to land and be made responsible for managing the land they depend on; meet economic and social requirements of local population; avoid losses of gene resources; help restore and maintain the ecological and climatic balance; promote local responsibility at various levels for the management of natural ecosystems; and promote intersectoral coordination.

4. Such goals require certain preconditions. It is generally recognized that conservation and sustainable utilization of natural resources can only be achieved if they are preceded by a comprehensive land-use planning exercise, including, where appropriate, environmental impact studies, taking into account, inter alia, the dynamics of population increase; if they can count on the participation of the population and are accompanied by rural development actions in and around the area to be managed on a sustainable basis. It is also generally recognized that in many cases sustainable development in other sectors cannot be achieved if the dependency of the rural population on forests and the use of trees is ignored, and if forestry and agro-forestry activities are not integrated in the activities.

5. Taking into account the above, Agenda 21 should include the following forestry programmes:

(a) Supporting and promoting national afforestation and reforestation programmes including funding provisions;

(b) Developing more training and research and disseminating facilities for research results;

(c) Strengthening national planning, implementation, training and research capacities, in particular of developing countries' institutions entrusted with the management of productive forest areas and integrally protected ecosystems;

(d) Strengthening the planning and implementation capacity of local populations and national NGOs, particularly in developing countries, with a view to promoting their role in the protection and sustainable management of natural resources;

(e) Supporting the elaboration and implementation/application of master plans for land-use and systems of monitoring land-use activities including changes in forest cover;

(f) Supporting efforts to establish permanent productive and integrally protected areas, and to elaborate sustainable management plans for these areas and their support zones;

(g) Promoting and supporting efforts to integrate forestry and agro-forestry activities into development programmes and activities of other sectors;

(h) Increasing the generation of income through the encouragement of industry and trade in forest products based on sustainably managed forest resources.

Note: Agenda 21 is part of UNCED's overall work on forests. The Community supports the work going on in the Prepcom to develop a global consensus in the form of a declaration on forests to be adopted by UNCED. The Community believes that such a declaration should form the basis of the international legally binding Convention which is our ultimate aim.